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AUTHOR	Stein, June
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ABSTRACT

Fall 1979 grade sheets for all Minneapolis Community College students carrying 16 credits or more were examined to determine the course completion rates of those students carrying more units than are necessary to complete graduation requirements in six quarters. Grade point averages (GPA's) and the proportion of credits earned to the number of credits attempted were tallied by gender and by whether the student was new or returning. Since concern for student overload had centered in the English department, special attention was given to the grades of those students taking English 95, 101, or 102. Selected results showed that of the 142 students involved in the study, 88 were women and 62% were returning students. A total of 48.1% of the new students and 50% of the returning students completed 91% to 100% of their course work. GPA's averaged almost half a point higher for returning students (2.929) than for new students (2.533). Women fared better than men in both completion rate and GPA. While six of the nine students taking English 95 (a developmental course) did not pass, students in English 101 and 102 achieved a 70% and a 75% success rate, respectively. Only 14.8% of the women and 9.3% of the men registered for the same number of credits or for more credits in the succeeding quarter. (JP)

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June Stein
Student Services
Minneapolis Community College

February 1980

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Academic Success of Students Carrying More Than the Traditional Full-Time Credit Load at Minneapolis Community College

June Stein, Student Services
February 1980

Students who register for more credits than they can complete successfully have been a concern of both counselors and other faculty at Minneapolis Community College. Some students, new students in particular, may register for heavy credit loads because they do not realize the amount of time and effort involved. In other cases students understand the work load involved but events arise in their lives that prevent adequate attention to their studies. Returning students may register at MCC without seeing a counselor and may register for virtually any number of credits. New students are directed to see a counselor but can find ways to evade this procedure; also cancel-add procedure is not monitored. Should the college take account of the problem of excessive credit loads by restricting the number of credits a student may take for the student's own good?

This question was a topic of discussion in the fall of 1979 among some faculty and counselors. A study of the problem was agreed upon to shed light on the subject. Of course, a student taking six credits could be taking too many when other obligations are so heavy that insufficient time is left for study. However, it was agreed to study the academic records of students registered for 16 or more credits fall quarter 1979 to give some information about successful course completion rates by these students who were carrying more than the 15 credits needed to fulfill graduation requirements within six quarters.

Method

It was known that 5.9 percent of MCC's student body carried 16 or more credits in fall 1979. When fall quarter grades were available, the grade sheets for all

students carrying 16 or more credits were examined. The proportion of credits earned to number taken was tallied by gender and by whether the student was new fall quarter or was a returning student. In addition, grade point average (G.P.A.) was tallied in the same way. Concern about the problem in general had arisen in the English Division of the college. Therefore, grades of students who had taken English #95, #101 or #102 were tabled by whether the student had successfully completed one of these courses with a "C" or better (2.0 and higher) or not. Finally, whether students who took 16 or more credits continued to do so in subsequent quarters was studied by examining tenth day registration programs for winter quarter 1980 classes. Here the credit registration for winter quarter was compared with that for the fall 1979 quarter.

Results

A total of 142 students had registered for 16 or more credits in the fall quarter of 1979, 88 women and 54 men. In the group were 54 new students, 38.0 percent (who could be new first quarter freshmen or new advanced standing students) and 88 returning students, 62.0 percent of the total. These 142 students comprised the group studied. About three fifths of the new freshmen in the group had taken 16 credits; and the balance had taken more, including one man who took 30 credits. Of returning students, 45.5 percent had taken 16 credits; 20 percent, 17 credits; and the balance, up to 23 credits (see Table I, Part A).

Almost half the new students, 48.1 percent, completed 91 to 100 percent of their course work while 50.0 percent of returning students did. While 16.7 percent of new students earned no credits, only 4.5 percent of returning students earned none. Completion rates for women and men were markedly different. Women averaged a 92.0 percent course completion rate while men averaged 68.8 percent completion. "Completion" included "A," "B," "C," "D" and "P" grades (see Table I, Part B).

Fall quarter G.P.A. is tabled in Part C for the group studied. Grades averaged almost half a grade point higher for returning than for new students, 2.929 vs. 2.533 mean G.P.A., respectively. Women's G.P.A. was higher than men's, as other studies have shown, by about .36 of a grade. Of special importance in this study, however, is that almost a fourth of the new students, 24.1 percent, received grades below a "C" or no grades while only 9.1 percent of returning students did.

Table II shows data for students in the group who had registered for English #95, #101 and #102. Only nine of the students were taking English #95, a developmental course, but 4 of the 5 new students and 2 of the 4 returning students did not complete it. Freshmen English #101 was taken by 32 students almost 70 percent of whom received grades of 2.0 or over and about another 10 percent who received "D" grades. There was little difference in grades between new and returning students except that 18.2 percent of the new students took incompletes whereas none of the returning students did. English #102 was taken by but one new student who received "C" or above grades and by 16 returning students, three fourths of whom succeeded in the course.

Table III presents data concerning whether students taking heavier than average credit loads continue to do so in a subsequent quarter. By far the majority do not, judging by results of this study. Among women students, only 14.8 percent took the same number or more credits winter quarter as fall; 72.7 percent took fewer credits, mostly in the category of 15 or fewer, and 12.5 percent did not register. Only 9.3 percent of men students took the same or more credits, 20.4 percent did not register, and 70.3 percent took fewer credits, mostly 15 or less. Variations between new and returning students were small. Somewhat more new than returning men did not register or took the same or more credits.

Summary

This study of students carrying 16 or more credits, defined for this study as a heavy credit load, showed that about half the students, either new or returning, completed essentially all the credits for which they were registered. However, three times as many new as returning students completed no credits and about two and a half times more new than returning students received no grades or grades below a "C." Among the new students who took the developmental English course #95, most of the new and half the returning students did not complete the course. Completion rates for Freshmen English #101 were about the same for new and returning students, but new students took more incompletes. Finally, most students took fewer credits the succeeding quarter.

Conclusion

It would appear that if restrictions on credit load were established, they should be directed at the new student to be most productive. Obviously, many students can handle a heavier than average credit load. Many other students, however, may benefit from additional counseling to help them understand the implications of a heavy credit load. Some procedural mechanism in the registration process requiring counseling assistance or college permission before registration may help them avoid failure and use their time and money more effectively.

Table I
Fall Quarter Academic Records of Students Who Registered
for 16 or More Credits Fall Quarter 1979
Tallied by Sex and Whether Student was New or Returning

Part A. Credit Registration

Credit Registration	New Students				Returning Students				All 16+ Credit Students			
	Women	Men	Totals		Women	Men	Totals		Women	Men	Totals	
	N	N	N	%	N	N	N	%	N	N	N	%
16	24	9	33	61.1	29	11	40	45.5	53	20	73	51.4
17	5	4	9	16.7	7	11	18	20.5	12	15	27	19.0
18	3	1	4	7.4	6	7	13	14.8	9	8	17	12.0
19					5	3	8	9.1	5	3	8	5.6
20	1		1	1.9	1	2	3	3.4	2	2	4	2.8
21	4	2	6	11.1	2	2	4	4.5	6	4	10	7.0
22					1		1	1.1	1		1	.7
23						1	1	1.1		1	1	.7
30		1	1	1.9						1	1	.7
Totals	37	17	54	100.1	51	37	88	100.0	88	54	142	99.9
Percents				38.0				62.0	62.0	38.0		100.0

Part B. Proportion of Credits Earned to Those Taken

% Credits Earned of Registration												
91 - 100	21	5	26	48.1	31	13	44	50.0	52	18	70	49.3
81 - 90	3	2	5	9.3	8	3	11	12.5	11	5	16	11.3
71 - 80	1	1	2	3.7		2	2	2.3	1	3	4	2.8
61 - 70					4	6	10	11.4	4	6	10	7.0
51 - 60	2	1	3	5.5	1	3	4	4.5	3	4	7	4.9
41 - 50		3	3	5.5	4	5	9	10.2	4	8	12	8.5
31 - 40	4	1	5	9.3	2		2	2.3	6	1	7	4.9
21 - 30												
11 - 20						2	2	2.3		2	2	1.4
1 - 10		1	1	1.9						1	1	.7
0	6	3	9	16.7	1	3	4	4.5	7	6	13	9.2
Totals	37	17	54	100.0	51	37	88	100.0	88	54	142	100.0
(Proportion) Median N. Credits Earned	91.7	55.0	88.5		92.3	69.7	90.5		92.0	68.8	89.9	

Table I (cont.)

Part C. Fall Quarter G.P.A.

	New Students				Returning Students				All 16± Credit Students			
	Women	Men	Totals		Women	Men	Totals		Women	Men	Totals	
G.P.A.	N	N	N	%	N	N	N	%	N	N	N	%
4.0	8	2	10	18.5	7	3	10	11.4	15	5	20	14.1
3.9												
3.8	3		3	5.6	2		2	2.3	5		5	3.5
3.7	1		1	1.8	4	1	5	5.7	5	1	6	4.2
3.6	1		1	1.8	4	1	5	5.7	5	1	6	4.2
3.5	2		2	3.7	1	5	6	6.8	3	5	8	5.6
3.4		1	1	1.8	4	2	6	6.8	4	3	7	4.9
3.3	2	1	3	5.6	6	2	8	9.1	8	3	11	7.8
3.2	2		2	3.7	2		2	2.3	4		4	2.8
3.1	2		2	3.7	2		2	2.3	4		4	2.8
3.0	1		1	1.8	3	2	5	5.7	4	2	6	4.2
2.9		1	1	1.8	1	1	2	2.3	1	2	3	2.1
2.8		2	2	3.7	1	2	3	3.4	1	4	5	3.5
2.7		1	1	1.8	1	1	2	2.3	1	2	3	2.1
2.6	1	1	2	3.7	1	2	3	3.4	2	3	5	3.5
2.5					3	5	8	9.1	3	5	8	5.6
2.4		2	2	3.7	2	2	4	4.5	2	4	6	4.2
2.3	1		1	1.8	3	1	4	4.5	4	1	5	3.5
2.2	1		1	1.8					1		1	.7
2.1												
2.0	4	1	5	9.3	1	2	3	3.4	5	3	8	5.6
1.9		1	1	1.8						1	1	.7
1.8		1	1	1.8						1	1	.7
1.7	1		1	1.8	1		1	1.1	2		2	1.4
1.6												
1.5						1	1	1.1		1	1	.7
1.4					1	1	2	2.3	1	1	2	1.4
1.3												
1.2												
1.1	1		1	.8					1		1	.7
1.0												
.0	6	3	9	16.7	1	3	4	4.5	7	6	13	9.2
Totals	37	17	54	99.5	51	37	88	100.0	88	54	142	99.7
Mean	2.643	2.294	2.533		3.110	2.678	2.928		2.914	2.557	2.778	

Table II
Satisfactory vs. Unsatisfactory Work of Students
with 16 or More Credits Who Took English 95, 101, or 102
Fall Quarter 1979

English 95

Fall 1979 Grade	New Students Women N	Men N	Totals N	%	Returning Students Women N	Men N	Totals N	%	All 16± Credit Students Women N	Men N	Totals N	%
2.0 & over	1		1	20.0	1	1	2	50.0	2	1	3	33.3
1.0 - 1.9												
N, W	3	1	4	80.0		1	1	25.0	3	2	5	55.6
Incomplete						1	1	25.0		1	1	11.1
Totals	4	1	5	100.0	1	3	4	100.0	5	4	9	100.0

English 101

2.0 & over	11	4	15	68.2	4	3	7	70.0	15	7	22	68.8
1.0 - 1.9	1	1	2	9.1	1		1	10.0	2	1	3	9.4
N, W	1		1	4.5	1	1	2	20.0	2	1	3	9.4
Incomplete	3	1	4	18.2					3	1	4	12.5
Totals	16	6	22	100.0	6	4	10	100.0	22	10	32	100.1

English 102

2.0 & over		1	1	100.0	8	4	12	75.0	8	5	13	76.5
1.0 - 1.9						1	1	6.3		1	1	5.9
N, W					1		1	6.3	1		1	5.9
Incomplete						2	2	12.5		2	2	11.8
Totals		1	1	100.0	9	7	16	100.1	9	8	17	100.1

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Table III
Credit Registration Winter Quarter 1980
by Students Who Took 16 or More Credits Fall Quarter 1979

New Students Fall Quarter

Fall Qtr. Credits	Winter Quarter Registration: Women Not Regis. N	Fewer Credits <16 N	Credits ≥16 N	Equal or More Cr. N	Totals N	Men Not Regis. N	Fewer Credits <16 N	Credits ≥16 N	Equal or More Cr. N	Totals N
16	4	15		5	24	3	5		1	9
17	1	3	1		5	1	1	1	1	4
18		3			3		1			1
19										
20										
21		2	3		5		2			2
22										
23										
30							1			1
Total N's	5	23	4	5	37	4	10	1	2	17
Percents	13.5	62.2	10.8	13.5	100.0	23.5	58.8	5.9	11.8	100.0

Returning Students Fall Quarter

16	2	21		6	29	2	7		2	11
17	1	5		1	7	2	7	1	1	11
18	1	5			6	1	4	2		7
19	1	2	2		5			3		3
20				1	1	1	1			2
21		2			2	1		1		2
22	1				1					
23							1			1
Total N's	6	35	2	8	51	7	20	7	3	37
Percents	11.8	68.6	3.9	15.7	100.0	18.9	54.1	18.9	8.1	100.0

All 16 ± Credit Students

16	6	36		11	53	5	12		3	20
17	2	8	1	1	12	3	8	2	2	15
18	1	8			9	1	5	2		8
19	1	2	2		5			3		3
20				1	1	1	1			2
21		4	3		7	1	2	1		4
22	1				1					
23							1			1
30							1			1
Total N's	11	58	6	13	88	11	30	8	5	54
Percents	12.5	65.9	6.8	14.8	100.0	20.4	55.5	14.8	9.3	100.0